

THE TRIBECA TRIB

Campaign to Harbor Middle Eastern Dancers Born of Tragedy



Still from the split screen of a video in which Adel Euro accompanies himself on the oud, a traditional Middle Eastern instrument.

By CARL GLASSMAN

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“He was a natural.”

That’s how Jonathan Hollander, artistic director and founder of Tribeca-based Battery Dance Company, remembers Adel Euro, a talented young dancer who had become his protégé, 6,000 miles away in war-ravaged Iraq. “He had fire in the belly to overcome anything and just do it. Nothing was going to stop him.”



Sean Scantlebury and Clement Mensah (far left and right) of the Battery Dance Company with Adel Euro and Battery Dance artistic director Jonathan Hollander. Photo: Courtesy of Battery Dance Company

And nothing, perhaps, would have. But on July 3 the devastating blast from a suicide truck bomber in Baghdad took the life of the 23-year-old artist along with more than 300 other innocents.

What tragically brought an end to this promising talent—a breakdance and street-style performer and choreographer, self-taught from YouTube videos—has set in motion an effort to rescue other dancers from both the danger and creative repression in the Middle East. Battery Dance last month launched the Adel Euro Campaign for Dancers Seeking Refuge. The fundraising drive hopes to provide an American haven to dancers like Adel who not only were at risk from conflict, but from the practice of an art form viewed as provocative and even profane.

Hollander already had hoped to resettle Adel in New York for training and a possible career. So taken with the dancer's drive and talent that he had been training Adel via Skype, with Battery dancer and choreographer Sean Scantlebury. In April 2015, the two performed together in Jordan at the Amman Contemporary Dance Festival, in a work choreographed by Scantlebury and rehearsed in Amman. It was Adel's first live professional performance. Hollander called the result "miraculous."

Adel Euro performs with Mira Cook and Sean Scantlebury of the Battery Dance Company at the Amman Jazz Festival in 2015.



Through its touring and cultural exchange programs in more than 60 countries, Battery Dance has long had an international focus, and Hollander said this campaign fits right in.

“We have been exploring for years what a dance company can do to affect social equality, social justice, social impact. So this is not alien to us,” he said. “It’s moving the dial seriously into more and more responsibility.”

And if he is successful, he said, in two years he will have an ensemble of five or six dancers touring U.S. schools and colleges and shattering cultural stereotypes. An initial goal of \$30,000, he said, could resettle one dancer in New York who, in turn, would “telegraph to the wider world what’s possible” and provide a platform for further support.

Hollander, in the meantime, emphasized the imperative to act quickly and, in particular, mentioned a Palestinian dancer in Damascus who he said is now in grave danger.

“This is not something to take your time about,” he said.

To learn more about the Adel Euro Campaign for Dancers Seeking Refuge and to make a donation, click [here](#).